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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC 03913-84
6 July 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH: Herbert E. Meyer
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM:
Assistant NIO for Africa

SUBJECT: Your Request for a Background Paper on Sudan

1. The following is the update on the situation in Sudan that you requested in your conversation with on 3 July.

The Current Military Situation

2. The Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA), the major southern insurgent group, began the initial phase of its rainy season offensive in mid-June by besieging five small government garrisons along the Ethiopian border. Its main goal is to weaken and demoralize the Sudanese military by forcing it to defend minor, non-strategic border posts. Nimeiri originally wanted to minimize rainy season military operations in the south by defending only the most important garrisons. His military leadership now has convinced him that a string of insurgent victories in the south will produce a political backlash in Khartoum, particularly if the insurgents capture a provincial capital.

3. Sudanese forces are only marginally capable of defending their smaller border garrisons against the insurgents, and it is doubtful the government can contain a sustained, widespread offensive during the rainy season. The main obstacle in the way of a significant insurgent victory over government forces in the south is continued tribal-based infighting among the insurgents. This internecine strife so far has blunted the effectiveness of the insurgent campaign, and it could threaten the success of any wider insurgent offensive against the poorly supplied, out-gunned, and demoralized government garrisons during the height of the rainy season in July and August.

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Ethiopian-Libyan Assistance

4. Addis Ababa is continuing its cooperation with Libya to provide assistance to Sudanese dissidents. The desire of the Ethiopians to retaliate for alleged Sudanese support for Ethiopian and Libyan dissidents is at the heart of this alliance, as is Qadhafi's personal animosity for President Nimeiri which has been manifest many times by his efforts to subvert the regime. Ethiopia's support for Sudanese dissidents has fluctuated on occasion but in the past year Addis Ababa has taken an especially active role as intermediary for the distribution of Libyan arms to southern Sudanese insurgents.

5. The SLA currently has an estimated 4,000-6,000 members under Colonel John Garang. Southern insurgents use Ethiopia as a base for operations and Addis Ababa provides military advisers, logistical support, and several training facilities near the Sudanese border in the vicinity of Gambela, Ethiopia. Libyan military aid has included small arms, heavy mortars, machine guns, light anti-tank weapons, tactical communications, ammunition and basic supplies.

6. We may yet see another Libyan attempt to attack Khartoum with TU-22 aircraft as occurred last March. Analysts throughout the Community have detected fragmentary evidence that the Libyan TU-22s have been noted practicing over Libya and the pilot who was involved in the March incident is again on the scene. This information was presented yesterday at a meeting at State for Deputy Assistant Secretary Jim Bishop, in order to alert him and others in case another attack brings an urgent appeal from Nimeiri for US assistance. The Sudanese are no better equipped to detect and repel a new attack than they were last March.

US Congressional Concerns About the Sudan

7. In early June of this year Congressman Volpe, Chairman of the African Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, sent a letter to the State Department stating that US military aid to Sudan should be terminated since the Sudanese government was using US equipment, specifically F-5 aircraft, against innocent civilians in the south. The House African Subcommittee became interested in this issue because of a detailed New York Times article published earlier this year that focused on Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia. The article highlighted alleged human rights violations by Sudanese government forces who reportedly wounded innocent villagers in southern Sudan while pursuing insurgents. The author's sources claimed that the fighting had forced villagers to flee the south and many came to Ethiopian refugee camps seriously wounded.

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8. Little additional congressional activity has developed on the issue since early June. Assistant Secretary of State Crocker had planned to brief the African Subcommittee but has not yet done so. Nonetheless, news reports of Nimeiri's dispensing "Islamic Justice" in emergency courts since late April and the shootdown of a US-supplied F-5 by insurgents two weeks ago will probably stimulate additional congressional activity regarding human rights in Sudan and US military aid. I am not certain yet how great an effort will be mounted to stop any military aid we might give to Nimeiri should he request it. As you may recall in your recent conversation with [redacted] Crocker was concerned about congressional pressure but thought there was still time before the US might be faced with a tough decision about supporting Nimeiri or abandoning him by not being able to supply equipment that he needs to fight the dissidents in the south.

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